"He Will Bid Me Cross The Border": George Borrow's *Wild Wales*, O. M. Edwards's *Cartrefi Cymru* and the imagined nation. [1]

Aidan Byrne

Department of English, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, United Kingdom

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This article argues that George Borrow's *Wild Wales* (1862) and O. M. Edwards's *Cartrefi Cymru* (1896) construct Wales in significantly different ways through their authors' journeys around Wales in the mid- and late-Victorian periods by drawing on Benedict Anderson's theory that nationalism requires industrial capitalism to construct an 'imagined nation'. I suggest that Borrow's neo-Romantic Wales allows for elective affinity for cultured outsiders while discursively excluding 'lower' ethnic groups, while Edwards's work constructs an essentialist and exclusive respectable, Nonconformist Wales. It further argues that beneath the didactic purpose of the texts, both texts hold therapeutic or recuperative significance for their authors.

Keywords: George Borrow; O. M. Edwards; *Wild Wales*; *Cartrefi Cymru*; Wales; travel

As a bilingual intelligentsia centred on the Cymru Fydd (Young Wales) movement adapted the cultural politics of Young Italy, Young Ireland and Kossuth's Hungarian nationalism in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century, Wales became an 'imagined nation'. Denied political expression, Welsh intellectual leaders often employed by the State located Welshness in the language, the struggle for Disestablishment, the foundation of Welsh higher education institutions, Wales's mountainous geography, the rural heartland and in the study of history, literature and folklore.[2] Moreover, the struggle to enlist the past in support of Welsh nationalist identity required a new concept of contiguous temporality in which cultural survival – rather than political identity – was the principal virtue, espoused through the production of vernacular educational, historical and cultural texts.

The 'imagined nation', asserts Benedict Anderson, is a construction of late modern economic and cultural conditions, under which a nation, as distinct from a state or empire, could be imagined under capitalist economic and industrial conditions. Vernacular literacy, an educated, bilingual and often imperially-employed intelligentsia interested in philology, folklore and history and high-volume printing and distribution networks are all products of industrial capitalism.[3] Thus modernity gives rise to the conditions necessary for Welsh nationalism – even an anti-modern, anti-industrialist version – within the imperial framework of Victorian Britain.

Two Victorian publications enunciate competing constructions of the 'imagined Wales': George Borrow's *Wild Wales* (1862) and Owen Morgan Edwards's 1896 *Cartrefi Cymru* ('Homes of Wales'), the alliterative titles retrospectively invoking a dialogical relationship. They are united by a keen awareness of the political and emotional importance of space and place, which Kirsti Bohata asserts is 'a clearly recognizable feature of Welsh writing in both languages'.[4] Borrow's account of his

1854 pedestrian journey around Wales is significant especially for its assertion that Welshness, or Celticism, is an *elective* identity available to anyone who can master the language and literature. Although Borrow reluctantly acknowledges his 'Saxon' identity, his repeated – often infuriating – demonstrations of linguistic and cultural superiority over actual Welsh-speakers asserts an open, hybrid but also backwards-looking concept of Welshness rooted in the past. Borrow's narrative is structured by a set of recurring tensions, events and relationships between the Welsh-speaking narrator and natives, the Irish, other English people, Anglicans, Catholics and Nonconformists.

Edwards's *Cartrefi Cymru* is more obviously nationalist in Anderson's sense of the term. Edwards, who was for some time Chief Inspector of Schools for Wales, encouraged readers to understand their national consciousness through contemplating exemplary historical figures rooted in authentic, mountainous ruralism. Edwards's itinerary comprises the homes of 'two hymn-writers, two preachers, three poets, two prose writers, a religious martyr, a composer and a saint'.[5] Edwards's inspirations are Welsh-speaking, mostly devout Nonconformists, ideal models for the emerging *gwerin* or respectable folk of Wales.

George Borrow, **Wild Wales** *and Elective Affinity*

George Borrow was born in Norfolk of a Cornish father and English mother, and the family moved around Britain and Ireland as Borrow Sr. pursued his job as an army recruiter.[6] Borrow claims to have learned Irish and Welsh informally and independently as a boy and was an enthusiastic translator of Welsh poetry, though his command of Welsh is doubtful. Numerous times in *Wild Wales* he is misunderstood by Welsh-speakers, while one of his interlocutors recalled that he spoke '*funny* Welsh … a good vocabulary but poor pronunciation.[7] Borrow's previous books, particularly *The Bible in*

Spain (1843) about his journeys on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), which romanticised tales of travelling with Romany Gypsies, indicate an affinity with 'other' ethnic communities.[8] He bemoans his association with 'uncouth and low' Englishness, compared to the 'kind hospitable Celts in general' (*WW*, 8) and partially fulfils Anderson's category of the homeless bilingual functionary who provides nationalist leadership.[9]

Borrow's purpose is supposedly personal: to visit the sites of his literary heroes and '"fully enjoy"' the '"beauties and wonders"' of the region (*WW*, 142). He is an eccentric 'nomad' whose books instantiate a tradition of 'shifty (and biographer-baffling) mixture of genres: fiction, memoir, travelogue, ethnography, and natural history' which express resistance to 'civil society and an industrial economy'.[10] Like O. M. Edwards, Borrow's Welsh Wales is enacted through travel, in which geographical expression of linguistic and cultural Otherness is sought. By conversing with Welsh-speakers, demonstrating his mastery of their language and culture, and by visiting the haunts of his literary heroes, he constructs himself as an elective Welshman yet remains ur-English and loyal to a 'primordial' Britain.[11]

Borrow persuades his wife to consent to visiting Wales which, she concedes, '"though not so fashionable as Leamington or Harrowgate [*sic*], was a very nice picturesque country"' (*WW*, 21). She frames Wales in faded Romantic tourist terms, as does Borrow sometimes, but the narrator's antiquarian interests are expressed within the picaresque style of the previous generation: the journey seems to be partly an attempt to revive the early success of *The Bible in Spain* (1843) and Borrow's rambling youth. Furthermore, Wales allows the author to turn his knowledge of the language and boyhood enthusiasm for philology 'to some account' (*WW*, 21). Thus Wales is positioned as a more serious culture, a suitable destination for a man, as a suitable venue

for Romantic experience, and as a more fruitful source of *lieux de memoire* than feminised and ephemeral 'fashionable' English resorts.[12]

Deborah Nord suggests that Borrow's wanderings and often sexualised encounters are Oedipal responses to his soldier father, and views the author's 'linguistic desire' as sublimated sexual passion.[13] Although many encounters *are* sexually charged, most of Borrow's conversations with Welsh-speakers are competitive. In Chester he annoys a Welsh bookseller who 'did not approve of an Englishman's understanding Welsh' by translating a couplet into English (*WW*, 39). He explains the etymology of 'carn-lleidyr' to another Welsh-speaker (*WW*, 60-1) and frequently seeks to educate the Welsh about their own language and culture. Borrow's didacticism also generates cultural continuity. Although his purpose is to assert his elective Welshness, he makes nationhood possible by asserting the unchanging and accessible core of Welsh culture. Borrow's visits to the homes of Iolo Goch, Gronwy [*sic*] Owen, Twm o'r Nant, Dafydd ap Gwilym (*WW*, 77-83, 183-186, 330-347, 490-7) and others create a Welsh patriarchy, yet most of his exclusively male heroes are outsiders to some degree, like Borrow himself. His own definition of Welshness is covertly autobiographical, 'exotic, authentic, noble and eccentric', fixed and ahistorical – a particularly nineteenth-century, Romantic version of nationalist consciousness.[14]

Borrow's discourse and eye are also Romantic. Mountains are 'majestic', streams run through 'chasms' and waterfalls are 'cataracts' (*WW*, 387). Taf vale 'formed an exquisite picture, in which there was much sublimity, much still quiet life, and not a little of fantastic fairy loveliness' (*WW*, 578). He is a man of feeling. The 'horrors' or 'morbid tension' appear frequently in the author's work: Mencher suggests that Borrow suffers from existential dread while Collie diagnoses epilepsy.[15] Translating a poem about Glyndŵr's court makes him weep ('How much more happy,

innocent and holy I was in the days of my boyhood when I translated Iolo's ode than I am at the present time!' (*WW*, 375)) and the pathetic fallacy is much in evidence. Borrow's mood and experience of the landscape often influence each other. He recommends readers to

> [g]aze on … the horrid seething pot or cauldron, the gloomy volcanic slit, and the spectral shadowy Devil's Bridge for about three minutes … then scramble up the bank and repair to your inn, and have no more sight-seeing that day, for you have seen enough. And if pleasant recollections do not haunt you through life of the noble falls and the beautiful wooded dingles … and awful and mysterious ones of the monks' boiling cauldron, the long, savage, shadowy cleft, and the gray, crumbling, spectral bridge, I say boldly that you must be a very unpoetical person indeed. (*WW*, 464)

Borrow's treatment of those he meets reinforces this Romantic inwardness. Although he is interested in other people, most encounters offer the opportunity to display his own abilities, knowledge and Celtic sensibility. Conversations ritualistically begin with an exchange that allows Borrow to position himself as Welsh, Celtic or otherwise non-English. A young couple cannot tell whether he is Welsh or a speaker of '"horrid English"' (*WW*, 256). A man calls him a 'bad Englishman' for being uninterested in London matters (*WW*, 274). Borrow allows another to think he is Welsh-American (*WW*, 290-3). A man in a pub tells him '"I see you are a Cumro"' (*WW*, 375: 'Cymro' = Welshman). In the next pub his English and Welsh are considered so execrable that he is assumed to be from South Wales (*WW*, 377) yet in the South he is twice jeered as a North Welshman (*WW*, 488, 535-6). On Anglesey he is taken for a Spaniard (*WW*, 201) and another man assumes Borrow must be '"from Llydaw [Brittany], or Armorica … where I am told the real old Welsh language is still spoken"' (*WW*, 233). Borrow assures his interlocutor that the Bretons are thriving and only reveals himself as English

in a parting shot, having elicited an anti-Saxon comment from him.

Frequently Borrow demonstrates to the living Welsh that they have lost their heritage. He translates some lines by Twm o'r Nant to a Welsh-speaking 'old Dame', who confesses that they are '"Welsh, I know, but they are far beyond my understanding"' and that until Borrow obliged, '"I never found any one before who could translate them"' (*WW*, 78-9). Thus by demonstrating the permeability of Welsh nationality through speaking Welsh and educating the natives in their own culture, during his nomadic encounters with non-English British people Borrow temporarily escapes the alienated condition of industrial, coarse Englishness.[16] Unlike the English, Welsh peasants still have poetry at their core:

> "What a difference … between a Welshman and an Englishman of the lower class. What would a Suffolk miller have said if I had repeated to him verses out of Beowulf or even Chaucer, and had asked him about the residence of Skelton?" (*WW*, 116-7)

Borrow's 'personal multiculturalism' often arouses suspicion, hostility or disbelief during his journey.[17] Some of the Welsh people he meets are wedded to the view both ancient and (in Anderson's sense) modern, that nationality and ethnicity are determined linguistically. Although Borrow more than once calls monoglot Welsh speakers 'real Welsh' (*WW*, 564), he usually delights in undermining essentialist Welsh attitudes. On one of the occasions where a Welsh-speaker refuses to understand Borrow (he rarely accepts that his rusty Welsh might be faulty), they argue vehemently. She asserts that English tongues are too short for Welsh; he reproves her as a '"disgraceful figure"' and humiliates her by demonstrating that the Welsh for 'salmon' is not the same as English as she thinks, but 'eawg', his phonetic representation of 'eog'. '"I never heard the words before," said the woman, "nor do I believe them to be Welsh."

Borrow's reply is sharp. ' "You say so," said I, "because you do not understand Welsh"' (*WW*, 87). She defines Welshness physically (long tongues) and linguistically – Borrow mischievously undermines her essentialism by speaking Welsh at all, and purer Welsh at that. Commanding 'the privileged bardic registers of their language … must have been disconcerting' or alienating.[18] The Welsh generally fear Welsh-speaking Englishmen for good reasons, Borrow acknowledges:

> The Welsh are afraid lest an Englishman should understand their language, and, by hearing their conversation, become acquainted with their private affairs, or by listening to it, pick up their language which they have no mind that he should know – and their very children sympathise with them. All conquered people are suspicious of their conquerors. The English have forgot that they ever conquered the Welsh, but some ages will elapse before the Welsh forget that the English have conquered them. (*WW*, 294)

Borrow is not always so understanding. On one occasion he responds to silent suspicion by ostentatiously taking notes on his fellow drinkers before being driven out (*WW*, 414); another time an English settler explains that while the Welsh have no treasonous intentions, '"they are as jealous of strangers hearing their discourse as if they were plotting gunpowder treason"' (*WW*, 419) – a tendency shared by the Gypsy who tries to poison Borrow in *Lavengro*. Some Welshmen resist the penetrating scrutiny of the outsider. One tells him that he will

> "do anything for him but answer questions, and let him hear my discourse … before him deem it wise to be mum, quite mum. Know what he come about. Wants to hear discourse of poor man, that he may learn from it poor man's little ways and infirmities … to serve for fun to Lord Palmerston and the other great gentlefolks in London". (*WW*, 550)

To this suspicious Welshman and others, Borrow is no independent eccentric, but a representative of a repressive state which conducts extensive and humiliating

surveillance for the purposes of control and of mockery: the Blue Books are clearly at the back of the man's mind.[19] The only possible solution is bilingual silence.

These Welsh-speakers whose discourse Borrow often calls 'corrupt' or 'jargon' are part of a fluid and living linguistic community, although one obliging fellow tells Borrow that '"your Welsh is different from ours, and of course better, being the Welsh of the grammar"' (*WW*, 253). The author's antiquarian devotion to etymology and linguistic authenticity, and his reproduction of this comment contradicts to some extent his belief that membership of any linguistic group is open to anyone with sufficient command of the language.

Wild Wales *and national character*

Borrow's work enunciates a hierarchical system of ethnic differences based on physical appearance, character, behaviour and spirituality, demonstrated by his encounters with English, Welsh, Irish and Gypsy people. The English are materialistic, arrogant and crude, such as the godless, oversexed Wrexham couple whom Borrow assumes are 'Genuine descendants … of certain of the old heathen Saxons' (*WW*, 369) or the Wolverhampton '"fast young man … with little or no literature"' encountered in Bala (*WW*, 395-8) who to Borrow's horror mistakes him for another Wolverhampton merchant. Yet the English do have an honourable role, which is to civilise the Celts, as Borrow tells bloodthirsty, red-haired Irishman Patrick Flannagan: '"How fortunate it is that the Irish have the English among them, to prevent their cutting each other's throats"' (*WW*, 553).

This rehearsal of Victorian imperialism is one of many Irish encounters, all of which structure *Wild Wales* in comparative ethnic terms. Borrow's diaries suggest that they are exaggerated, rearranged or invented to address publisher John Murray's

complaint that the manuscript lacked 'stirring incident', and to provide thematic continuity.[20] They are extreme Celts, not unattractive but largely unredeemable, serving a disciplinary function. John Jones is frightened of the '"savage, brutish"' 'Gwyddeliad' [*sic*] vagabonds who after the Famine have displaced the '"dark, handsome"' 'Gipsiaid' in Wales (*WW*, 83-4).

Borrow divides the Celts into 'wild' Welsh and 'savage' Irish. Both are respected for their authenticity, but Welsh superstitions such as the Tylwyth Teg go un-mocked, whereas Irish Catholicism and superstition are routinely excoriated, such as Johanna Colgan's tale of being cursed (*WW*, 68, 568-7). The Irish are always red-haired, scruffy, potentially violent and superstitious, yet primitively admirable. The Bangor group is 'loud and dissonant', 'ragged and red-haired': '[w]ild looked the men yet wilder the women'. Obviously destitute they 'all walked with a free, independent, and almost graceful carriage … in many respects they were fine specimens of humanity' (*WW*, 168-9). However, his admiration is tempered by sectarianism. The Irish devotion to Catholicism is their worst characteristic, and qualifies them for cruel treatment. Two particular incidents stand out. In one, Borrow meets an Irish fiddler (*WW*, 150-55) whom he blackmails into playing 'Croppies Lie Down', the supremacist Orange song. It transpires that the fiddler once transferred his allegiance to the Orange cause in pursuit of a regular income and that, having been double-crossed by O'Connell's nationalists, he will betray his co-religionists again for Borrow's shilling. The Catholics and the Irish are thus revealed to be congenitally untrustworthy and mercenary.

Borrow also encounters some tinkers in Holyhead (*WW*, 240-44). They are 'ruffianly' and armed with 'shillealahs' [*sic*], and their leader's face is 'a jumble of savagery and roguishness … [a] genuine wild Irish face' (*WW*, 241). This man is convinced, like others previously, that Borrow is Father Toban whom he has often heard

say mass. Whether we should assume Borrow genuinely resembles Toban, that the man is ignorant or a liar is unclear. The Irishman demands a blessing to prevent shipwreck and threatens Borrow with '"a good big bating"' (*WW*, 242) if he denies being Toban or refuses the blessing. Violence, stupidity and superstition are what most provokes the narrator, and he improvises a Latin blessing once the man agrees that his 'blackguards' deserve to be saddled and bridled, ridden '"violently down to Holyhead or the Giant's Causeway"' and drowned '"like the herd of swine of old"' (*WW*, 242). The man refuses a blessing in Irish as '"no blessing at all"' (*WW*, 243) – his pre-modern belief is that Latin offers access to ontological truth, unlike Irish.[21] Conversely, Borrow values Welsh for its access to a noble past – echoing Anderson's assertion that new nations require historical continuity to be imaginable.[22]

Borrow punishes Irish superstition with trickery, but treats Welsh Nonconformists with more respect. Catholicism relegates its believers to the level of the Empire's other savages for, as he tells Calvinistic Methodist Edward Jones, it is modified Hinduism: '"Indians and Sepoys worship stocks and stones, and the River Ganges, and our Papists worship stocks and stones, holy wells and fountains"' (*WW*, 58). Although he stoutly proclaims Anglican superiority and erroneously asserts its Welsh strength, he expresses qualified respect for Dissenters, with the exception of most Methodists and teetotallers, although he 'found nothing to blame and much to admire in John Jones the Calvinistic Methodist of Llangollen' (*WW*, 75).

Despite his Anglican superiority and scepticism, Borrow is capable of self-awareness and self-mockery. Visiting the ruined monastery of Strata Florida where his hero medieval poet Dafydd ap Gwilym is buried, Borrow picks a yew tree and decides that it marks ap Gwilym's grave:

> relying on the possibility of its being the sacred tree, I behaved just as I should have done had I been quite certain of the fact: taking off my hat I knelt down and kissed its root, repeating lines from Gruffydd Gryg, with which I blended some of my own in order to accommodate what I said to present circumstances. (*WW*, 492)

His poetic declamation is self-consciously Bardic, but the tree-kissing idolatry is followed immediately with a theological conversation that suggests a degree of self-awareness: Borrow tells a farmer that the monastery is '"a house of idolatry to which hundreds of people used to resort … to worship images"' (*WW*, 493).

Eccentricity is the hallmark of *Wild Wales*.[23] Borrow's persona hovers on the edges of Welsh mid-Victorian culture, crosses class boundaries and evades most fixed political positions. He can be sharp on a number of subjects, particularly religion, yet eccentricity and humour defuse numerous potentially threatening situations. As an English gentleman who speaks Welsh, he attracts considerable hostility. But by appearing to have no agenda other than personal satisfaction – he once has to deny scouting for farmland (*WW*, 447-8) – Borrow escapes Welsh accusations of imperialist ignorance. Borrow is *sui generis*: he represents only himself, and his book is as much about positioning himself as a liminal figure as it is a travel narrative. Mencher describes him as a mental contemporary of Byron, Shelley, Keats and De Quincey, yet with the angst of a Victorian.[24] He is by turns Romantic and pragmatic, English and Welsh. *Wild Wales* ultimately functions ambiguously too. It proclaims the immutability of a Welsh culture which is lost, and asserts the enduring qualities of the Celt, while demonstrating that anyone, given the requisite skills, empathy and interests, can partake in Celtic pleasures of Welshness or at least become a critical friend: Borrow celebrates some cultural aspects of Welsh (and Irish) culture while retaining an English ability to prescribe and proscribe others from a privileged position.

***O. M. Edwards,* Cartrefi Cymru *and Imagined Wales*.**

Thirty-four years after *Wild Wales*' (1862) publication, Owen Morgan Edwards published *Cartrefi Cymru* (1896). The book collects eleven essays published in Edwards's periodical *Cymru* between 1891-93, with the addition of an essay on Rowland Fychan.[25] Like Borrow, Edwards used the Victorian railway system to visit Wales from his English home. Both used their travel writing to re-engage with a Welsh culture from which they had become partially disengaged, and both privileged their co-religionists: Borrow's Anglicanism is met by Edwards's gentler insistence on Nonconformity's centrality to Welsh *gwerin* culture. By exploring the Welsh environment and poetic spaces of his subjects, Edwards constructs a Wales immune to political reality and quotidian fluidity.[26]

As an Oxford don, popular historian and periodical publisher, Edwards was central to the late Victorian Welsh cultural renaissance, the aim of which, in line with Anderson's identification of a disaffected imperial bureaucracy and intelligentsia, was to apply at home the 'models of nationalism, nation-ness, and nation state' sweeping Europe.[27] Edwards's journalistic and historical output constructed 'a coherent and persuasive national narrative' through the (re)presentation of the past.[28] Through his invention of Welsh 'home' travel writing in *Cartrefi Cymru* (1896), *Tro Trwy'r Gogledd* ('Travels through the North', 1907) and *Tro i'r De* ('Travels to the South', 1907), Edwards added a spatial dimension to the nationalist cultural construction of Wales. The latter titles' prepositional shift is instructive. The North, heartland of the language and Edwards's birthplace is 'home' whereas the anglicised, industrial South is a place *to* which one voyages.

In keeping with the Protestant requirement for spiritual edification, Edwards invests his genial walking tour between Welsh homes with spiritual significance. He

visits the homes of Ann Griffiths (hymnodist), theologian and author ap Vychan, Edmwnd Prys the Renaissance poet and cleric, hymnodist Williams Pantycelyn, Ieuan Gwynedd the early Victorian Independent minister and journalist, early eighteenth-century Methodist Revivalist Howel Harris, the surprising choice of the family home of erotic and religious female poet Gwerfyl Fychan (Gwerful Mechain, c. 1462-1500) and Anglican Royalist poet and translator Rowland Fychan (1587-1667) to whom only two pages are devoted (*CC*, 98-9), John Penry the Puritan pamphleteer and anti-episcopal martyr, Ellis Wynne the author of *Y Bardd Cwsg* ('The Sleeping Bard'), a 'wild and wondrous work' Borrow translated in his youth (*WW*, 410), the Revd. Rhys Pritchard the reformed drunk of whom Borrow also writes (*WW*, 529-33), harpist Dafydd y Garreg Wen and finally that of Saint David.

Cartrefi Cymru presents no discrete explanation for the journeys. There is no introduction, and Edwards's motives must be gleaned from the text – personal emotion is respectably buried, unlike *Wild Wales*'s Romantic sensibility. His choice of destinations constructs a Wales in clear contrast to Borrow's. His subjects are heroes of Welsh-speaking Wales, intended to set a moral and spiritual example to its inhabitants, hence Edwards's reluctance to discuss Gwerfyl Fychan. Their homes are rural and often remote. Populous industrial South Wales is barely acknowledged: the importance of rural, Nonconformist Wales could not bear the intrusion. Although Edwards widens his choice to include some Civil War-era Anglicans and pre-Reformation Dewi Sant (Saint David), a note at the end of the book inserts some Nonconformist distance:

> Ni wn ddim i sicrwydd am Ddewi Sant. Nid wyf yn barod i ddywedyd ei fod yn fwy na bod hanner dychmygol, fel Arthur. (*CC*, 171)
>
> I know nothing for certain regarding Saint David. I am not prepared to say that he was more than a half-imaginary being, like Arthur. (*HoW*, 174)

Edwards invests the homes with connotations of rest and retreat, as do many male exiles: drinking milk and appreciating Welsh domestic simplicity offers them respite from the demands of cosmopolitan modernity.[29] Both authors valued Welsh hospitality, a virtue elevated into an 'ethic' in Gramich's Derridean reading.[30] One notable difference between the two accounts of Welsh hospitality is liquid refreshment. Borrow constantly seeks, drinks and rates ale, distrusting the Temperance movement's 'wishy-washy tea' and hypocrisy: the tea is slyly replaced by moonshine when he complains (*WW*, 35, 269-70). Edwards appears to be teetotal, and judges the hospitality – and Welshness – of those he meets by their milk, cream and tea. While Borrow enjoys 'excellent' buttermilk at Pengwern Hall Farm (*WW*, 65), Edwards elevates food, milk and tea to symbolic status. He (and Borrow) find many Welsh hotels to be filthy and uncomfortable. However, Llandovery's is exceptional:

> Yr oedd y bara can, yr ymenyn, a'r caws yn flasus, yr oedd yr hufen yn felyn dew, yn ddigon tew, chwedl Kilsby, i geiniog nofio ar ei wyneb yn ddi-brofedigaeth. Ac am y tê oedd; nid y drwyth roddir o'm blaen yn aml, trwyth nas gwn ar ddaear wrth ei hyfed beth sydd yn yr tepot gyda'r dwr, – pa un ai ffa'r corsydd ai dail carn yr ebol ai sug tybaco. (*CC*, 59-60)

> The wheaten bread, the butter, and the cheese were tasty; the cream was yellow and thick, thick enough, as Kilsby says, for a penny to float upon it without danger of sinking. And as for the tea, well, it was tea; it was not the decoction often set before me, a decoction about which I have no earthly idea, as I drink it, of what has been put into the teapot with the water, – whether bog-beans, coltsfoot leaves, or tobacco juice. (*HoW*, 62-3)

He also drinks creamy milk in Ann Griffiths' Dolwar Fechan, Pant-y-Celyn (*CC*, 20, 69), and elsewhere, fortifying himself physically and spiritually. The food is

authentically *gweriniaethol*, simple, homely and respectable, redolent of Wales' hospitality ethic and Protestant values.[31] In most of the homes he visits, the quality of the welcome and the food and drink offer some comfort. Welsh hospitality has endured the centuries, even if the new inhabitants do not always understand the purpose of Edwards's pilgrimage.

Edwards preserves and disseminates past cultural glories, though few of his largely Nonconformist, apolitical heroes appear in *Wild Wales*. Borrow visits the church where hymn-writer William Williams is buried without even mentioning him (*WW*, 524-5). By contrast, Edwards visits the area to see Williams' home, Pant-y-Celyn, as well as that of Rhys Pritchard, the reformed drunkard cleric to whom Borrow devotes considerable space. In the hotel, Edwards meets 'some English gentlefolk' and considers sharing transport with them:

> Ond, erbyn cael ymgom … nid oeddynt hwy wedi clywed gair erioed am Williams Pant y Celyn. Yr oeddynt wedi clywed llawer o son am Dwm Sion Cati, ac i chwilio am ei ogof ef yr oeddynt yn mynd. Pe buasai Twm Sion Cati yn ei ogof, os gwir pob stori, ni fuasai'r brodyr hyn mor awyddus am fynd yn agos ati. (*CC*, 60)

> But after having a conversation with them … they had never heard a word about Williams of Pant-y-Celyn. They had heard a great deal about Twm Shon Cati, and it was to seek out his cave they were going. Had Twm Shon Cati been in his cave, if every story be true, these brethren would not have been so anxious to go near it. (*HoW*, 63).

Whether or not Edwards had read *Wild Wales* this passage seems like a rebuke to Borrow and a slight on English tourists. The authors' treatments of the semi-historical thief and trickster Twm Siôn Cati (c. 1530-1609) dramatise their cultural differences. *Wild Wales* fondly recounts Twm's exploits, contributing to the common English stereotype of the roguish Welsh. Borrow's narration is strongly affected by the pride,

affection and admiration of his interlocutors for Twm's cleverness, wit, humane qualities and romantic nature (*WW*, 498-509). Borrow enjoyed a picaresque novel about Twm, though he criticises its attempt to downplay the protagonist's villainy, misremembers the title and omits the author's name.[32] Readers 'consider themselves defrauded by an attempt to apologise for the actions of the heroes' (*WW*, 507). Borrow recounts episodes from Twm's life with apparent glee, and the closest he gets to distancing himself is the observation that many of the stories are mythical and common to many cultures' tricksters (*WW*, 509). Twm for Borrow represents a swashbuckling Welshness which has passed away.

O. M. Edwards, writing at the other end of the Victorian period and more concerned with establishing respectability at the heart of Welshness takes a very different line. To him, Twm reinforces English touristic fantasies of Wales as a Wild West of crime and sex. The aborted joint trip symbolises a fork in the Welsh and English cultural roads – *Cartrefi Cymru*'s readers must visit the home of the hymn-writer rather than seek adventure and licentiousness with the English. Edwards implicitly criticises the English tourists for their ignorance of the real, respectable Wales of Williams Pantycelyn and their preference for sensationalist fiction. The conversation warns his readers of the perils of Anglicisation and allowing one's cultural representations to be controlled by the dominant culture.

Like Borrow, Edwards' perambulations are notably influenced by Romanticism. Landscape is frequently invested with emotion, discussed in artistic terms, or viewed through the prism of poetry or Biblical analogy:

> O'n hôl safai castell Cricieth, yn hyf fel pan y canai Iolo Goch iddo, ond heb ogoniant a heb oleuni mwy … Ar ein llaw dde yr oedd y môr, ac adlewyrch haul ar

> grib bob ton, yn gwneuthur inni feddwl am fyddin Sennacherib: "A phigau picellau fel sêr ar y lli / Pan dywynno yr haul ar las ddŵr Galili". (*CC*, 138)
>
> Behind us, Criccieth Castle stood out boldly as when Iolo Goch sang to it, except that its glory had vanished and lights no longer shone in its windows … On our right lay the sea, with the sun's reflection on every wave-crest, reminding us of Sennacherib's host: "And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea / When the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee". (*HoW*, 146-7)

The land and the culture imbue each other. The mountainous country produces its writers, and the country is produced through their works, the Bible and occasionally surprising English authors: the lines quoted above are from Byron's 1815 'The Destruction of Sennacherib'. Edwards' choice of poem is not simply aesthetic: both it and our author's vision is one of overwhelming hostility, fear, defeat and cultural spoliation.

Cartrefi Cymru shares something of Borrow's direct, personal style. Edwards's Welsh is conversational and welcoming, occasionally breaking into purple prose or flights of rhetoric. He writes in the historical and simple past tenses – the opening words are 'Yr wyf en eistedd…' ('I am seated…' (*CC*, 9)) – effortlessly implying Welsh cultural continuity down the centuries, an essential tool in the construction of the modern nation. Edwards repeatedly uses 'we' to refer both to his unnamed occasional companions and the 'imagined nation' of his readers, rendering spatial, cultural and temporal distance immaterial through shared cultural activity such as reading one of Edwards' own many magazines, newspapers and books.

Like Borrow, Edwards is saddened by the cultural gap perceptible between the Welsh and their glorious past. Both authors test their interlocutors' knowledge of Welsh and Welsh culture. Borrow does so from pride and a need to belong, and Edwards's motive is perhaps not dissimilar. He defines Welshness exclusively, as a melange of

language and mountainous heritage, yet he invokes culture to reintegrate himself with the nation he physically left some decades previously. His attachment to geographical Wales ebbed and flowed. In 1897 he wrote that 'I couldn't care less where I live', yet in a richly symbolic move he also bought vast tracts of land in Llanuwchllyn where he grew up in poverty, while continuing to live in Oxford.[33] This ambiguity is also clear in the structure and purpose of *Cartrefi Cymru*. Although Welsh cultural inheritance is what matters most, physically journeying to the homes and environs in which his subjects lived is what makes them real:

> O'm rhan fy hun, gwell gen I na dim yw edrych ar golygfeydd y bu rhai enwog ein gwlad yn edrych arnynt. Ond, er hynny, yr oedd rhyw foddhad imi deimlo fy mod wedi gweld y gwely y bu Edmwnd Prys yn cysgu ynddo… (*CC*, 51)

> For my part I prefer, above all things, looking at the views upon which the famous people of our land have looked. But, nevertheless, it was some satisfaction to me that I had seen the bed in which Edmwnd Prys had slept… (*HoW*, 54)

By viewing the same views, the beds in which his icons slept and the clocks which may or may not have ticked in their kitchens, Edwards elides the temporal and cultural gap between their day and his present. The rhythms of country life, good milk, butter and bread are so little changed that Wales is remade as a continuous, discrete entity – at the cost of excluding those labouring in industry and those ignorant of the Welsh tongue.

Edwards is more didactic on the subject of Welshness than Borrow. He often addresses the reader directly after yet another dispiriting conversation. Meeting a girl whose Anglicised education means that she only knows English songs, he writes 'Yr un dystoliaeth brudd a gaf ymhob man yng Nghymru … druan o eneidiau plant Cymru rhyngddynt oll' (*CC*, 149-50): 'It is the same sad testimony I get everywhere in Wales … pity the souls of the children of Wales between them all' (*HoW*, 157-8).

Cartrefi Cymru's purpose is only explained in the book's notes. Edwards rhetorically askes 'A yw daear gwlad ein tadau ychydig yn fwy cysegredig i rywun ar ôl darllen y peth a ysgrifennais?' (*CC,* 165): 'Has anyone felt the soil of the land of our fathers to be a little more sacred after reading what I have written?' (*HoW,* 175). His Wales is essentialist, exclusive, patriarchal and spiritual – he uses the word 'pererindod' (pilgrimage) in the same note. His disappointment with uncultured Welsh people implies that membership of a nation can be lost. Stability and cultural transmission of quietist bourgeois qualities are Edwards's core values, rather than innovation or revolution.

However, underneath the didactic purpose of *Cartrefi Cymru* may be glimpsed a more personal subtext. Just as Borrow's journey reconnects him to the travels of his youth, Edwards's journeys are also therapeutic. Katie Gramich describes his work in general as 'hybrid, anecdotal, topographical, historical, literary, and confessional'.[34] These elements are present in *Cartrefi Cymru,* but the confessional aspect is buried in Edwards's choice of subjects and quotations. In the midst of a storm, he finds himself compulsively remembering an Ann Griffiths hymn:

> Pan fo Sinai i gyd ym mygu
> Sain yr udgorn uchaf radd
> Caf fynd i wledda dros y terfyn
> Yng ngrym yr aberth, heb fy lladd. (*CC,* 22)
>
> When the storm-cloud hangs o'er Sinai
> And the trumpet call is clear,
> He will bid me cross the border
> To love's feast without a fear. (*HoW,* 22)

Edwards spent his life crossing political, geographical, professional and cultural borders, and this quotation suggests that beneath its public purpose, *Cartrefi Cymru*

fulfils some personal recuperative role. He fortifies himself against the fear of death by quoting Griffiths' letters and hymns on the subject (*CC*, 14-5) and to cope with life's vicissitudes, he turns to Williams Pantycelyn (*HoW*, 14-5, 17).

Hints of other regrets appear scattered throughout *Cartrefi Cymru.* Contemplating Edmwnd Prys's environment, the narrator remarks

> Synnwm paham na threuliwm fy oes ar y mynydd, a daeth i'm meddwl mor ynfyd oeddwm wrth dreulio fy oes ar yr iseldiroedd … Ond tybiwn i mai ar ben mynydd yn unig y mae dedwyddwch. (*CC*, 54)

> I wondered why I did not spend my days on the mountain, and I began to think how foolish I was when spending my days in the lowlands … But I imagined that joy is found only on a mountain top. (*HoW*, 58)

This from a man who a year later criticised the Welsh for romantic lassitude: 'Others build our bridges, others discover the treasures in our mountains, others lay our railway tracks – we listen to the melancholy murmur of the sea, we dream of the mountains'.[35] In *Wales*, he writes that 'while races and languages go, the mountains remain'.[36]

Edwards's sense of himself as a self-made man is clearly marked by dwelling on Tŷ Coch, Ap Vychan's humble stone cottage: Edwards too was born in an earth-floored cottage. Despite building himself a Welsh mansion, he is keen to extol the joys of the simple and restorative life:

> Rhwng y dwfr glân a'r mynydd-dir iach sydd yn ymyl, y mae'n lle wrth fodd Cymro athrylithgar a fo'n magu plant. (*CC*, 32)

> With the pure water and the healthy mountain-land near by, the place is all that a talented Welshman, rearing children, could wish for. (*HoW*, 34)

When Edwards reaches Llandovery and Pant-y-Celyn to visit William Williams' home, the melancholy undercurrent breaches the surface in multiple lengthy quotations from the hymnodist's work, quotations giving Edwards sufficient distance. As the blue sky replaces rainclouds (he is no stranger to the pathetic fallacy), Edwards is compelled to sing a Pantycelyn verse and his choice is instructive. 'Edrych am yr hindda hyfryd / 'Nol cawodydd geirwon iawn, / Ac i'm hysbryd, / Trwy'r cymylau, weld y wlad' (*CC*, 62) – 'I have sought the pleasant sunshine / After many a cruel shower, / That my spirit, / Through the clouds might see the land' (*HoW*, 65). He then devotes several pages (*CC*, 62-7) to mapping Pantycelyn's words onto the landscape. Almost every line is about enduring suffering, symbolised by fearsome storms buffeting the traveller and redemption achieved by reaching cool water, high mountains and sunshine. During this period, Edwards's personal life was under considerable strain. He was teaching at Oxford, undertaking relentless publishing enterprises, political activism and government consultancies. He was living apart from his wife and children and 'there was considerable strain on the marriage … [his wife] Elin's letters are full of reprimands and advice' and his friendship with author Eluned Morgan 'was the cause of uncomfortable exchanges and accusations'.[37] He suffered from 'debilitating headaches' and 'nervous trouble' that manifested itself as 'hiraeth' or longing for home.[38] Additionally, Edwards' entanglement with English educational values as an Oxford student and as an Inspector of Schools seem to have led him to yearn for an innocent and pristine Wales distinct from the snares of 'lowland' England.

Conclusion

Through their accounts of travelling through Wales, talking to people they meet and

visiting significant *lieux de memoire,* George Borrow and O. M. Edwards imagine into being two Waleses with significant differences and similarities. For Borrow, Wales is a survival from a more Romantic age in which wandering bards like himself were valued for their cultural contribution. It is also contested space within the British political sphere. Despising English brutishness yet valuing its civilising effect on the Celtic nations, Borrow's travels allow him to compare the behaviour and qualities of all the then-constituent nations of the United Kingdom. It is also a therapeutic journey. By imagining Welshness as open to all who admire its language and culture, he finds a degree of comfort in his participation and educational contribution.

O. M Edwards' *Cartrefi Cymru* is a much more culturally Victorian book, in the sense that it proclaims the quietist respectability of a newly-elevated, Welsh-speaking social class, the *gwerin*. While drawing on some of the same cultural sources as *Wild Wales*, it promotes a more bourgeois, less wild Welshness than Borrow's, by harnessing the resources of Welsh publishing to establish a Welsh readership. Edwards constructs a Whiggish sense of Welshness in which selected representatives of Welsh culture demonstrate progress towards a Nonconformist high point, for distribution amongst a readership literate in the vernacular and keen to establish a nation united through education and literature. It is a discourse partly of retreat, as Gramich asserts but the very existence of *Cartrefi Cymru* implies optimism: this receptive Welsh-speaking audience is assumed to exist.[39] Welsh-speakers can be in touch with the times, people and places presented in *Cartrefi Cymru*, and in doing so *en masse*, they constitute an 'imagined nation', one more exclusive than that envisaged by George Borrow.[40] Finally, both men bear emotional or psychological wounds which can only be healed by immersion in the physical and literary space that is Wales. Extending their personal

searches for healing becomes a motive for constructing a nation based on a stable, immutable past.

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[1] George Borrow, *Wild Wales* (1862: London: Collins, 1955); O. M. Edwards, *Cartrefi Cymru* (Wrecsam: Hughes a'i Fab, 1896); O. M. Edwards, *Homes of Wales* trans. T. Eurfyl Jones (Wrexham: Hughes and Son, 1931). Subsequent citations for these works will be given in the text abbreviated to *WW*, *CC* and *HoW*.

[2] Kenneth O. Morgan, 'Welsh Nationalism: The Historical Background', *Journal of Contemporary History* 6 (1) (1971): 153-172, 158, 163.

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 71.

[4] Kirsti Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), 80.

[5] Katie Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation: Telling Stories of Wales', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 6 (1): 2-19.

[6] Michael Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 9-15.

[7] Hugh Olliff, *On Borrow's Trail* (Llandysul: Gomer, 1982), 44.

[8] For a biographical overview, see M. B. Mencher, 'George Borrow', *English Studies* 79, no. 6 (1998), 536.

[9] Anderson, *Imagined Nations*, 55.

[10] Ian Duncan, 1998. 'Wild England: George Borrow's Nomadology'. *Victorian Studies* 41 (3) (1998): 381-404: 382.

[11] Duncan, 'Wild England', 386.

[12] Katie Gramich, ' "Every Hill has its History, Every Region its Romance": Travellers' Constructions of Wales, 1844-1913', in *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Benjamin Colbert (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2012), 147-163.

[13] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 13.

[14] Jodie Matthews, 'Borrowing Welshness: *Wild Wales*, Affiliation and Identity', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies* 6 (1, 2011): 53-61.

[15] Mencher, 'George Borrow', 543; Collie, *George Borrow*, 7-8.

[16] Duncan, 'Wild England', 394.

[17] George Hyde, 'Travelling Across Cultures: George Borrow's *Wild Wales*'. *Cambridge Quarterly* 33 (4, 2004): 331-343: 335.

[18] Hyde, 'Travelling Across Cultures', 338.

[19] The three-volume government report on the state of education in Wales became known as 'the Treason of the Blue Books' for its association of the Welsh language, Nonconformism and Welsh immorality, promiscuity and ignorance. See *The New Companion to the Literature of Wales*, ed. Meic Stephens (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998).

[20] Angus M. Fraser, 'George Borrow's *Wild Wales*'. *Trafodion Anrhydeddus Gymdeithas Y Cymmrodorion / Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1980), 163-173: 172.

[21] Anderson, *Imagined Nations*, 22-5.

[22] Anderson, *Imagined Nations*, 36.

[23] Matthews, 'Borrowing Welshness', 53-61.

[24] Mencher, 'George Borrow', 546.

[25] Hazel Davies, *O. M. Edwards* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1988), 62.

[26] Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation', 6.

[27] Anderson, *Imagined Nations*, 116.

[28] Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation', 2.

[29] Bohata, *Postcolonialism Revisited*, 101.

[30] Gramich, 'Every Hill', 151.

[31] Gramich 'Every Hill', 157.

[32] T. J. Llewellyn Pritchard, *The Surprising Adventures of Twm Shon Catti: A Wild Wag of Wales* (1828).

[33] Davies, *O. M. Edwards*, 66, 80.

[34] Gramich, 'Every Hill', 155.

[35] Davies, *O. M. Edwards*, 51.

[36] Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation', 9.

[37] Davies, *O. M. Edwards*, 61-2.

[38] Davies, *O. M. Edwards*, 81.

[39] Gramich, 'Narrating the Nation', 3.

[40] The 1931 sole translation of *Cartrefi Cymru* extends the Welsh nation to include interested English-speakers. However, the Welsh edition includes an English glossary of key Welsh terms, indicating that Edwards intended to appeal to Welsh learners of Welsh as well as monoglot Welsh-speakers.